[Annie Hightower]

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Rangelore

Gauthier, [Sheldon?] [F.?] FOLKSTUFF [Rangelore?]

Tarrant Co., [Dist.#7?] [46?]

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[FEC?]

Annie Hightower, 75, [living?] at 110 1/2 E. [Second?] [St.?], Fort Worth, Tex., was born on her father's farm in [Saline?] co., [Ark.?], Mar. 8, 1863. Her, father, Jason [W.?] [Heckman?], joined the [Confederate?] Army and served through the [Civil?] [War?]. He received wounds while in the army which proved fatal after he was [mustered?] out of service and his death took place in 1870. Her [mother?], Mrs. Jason W. Heckman, moved to Texas in 1872, with her two younger children and an orphan child, Hugh [Vermillion?]. She located in Bell co., Tex., where she had a son, John W. Hackman, who was then farming in the [Little?] River bottom, [adjacent?] to the town of [Belton?]. The Heckman family boarded a train at Benton, Ark., and traveled to [Texarkana?], Tex. From Texarkana, [they?] traveled by horse team and wagon to their destination. [After?] the family located in Bell co., they entered the cattle business. The children gathered [Mavericks?] to start a [herd?]. The Heckman brand was registered in the name of [Annie?] Heckman at Belton, and was 'A bar over O', made thus: [Annie?] Heckman was one of the few cowhands working on the range, as well as one of the few women who furnished music at the [dances?] by [playing?] the fiddle. Her story of range life follows:

“Before I became a married woman, my named was Annie Heckman. I was born in [?] co., [Ark.?], March 8, 1863. My father's name was Jason W. Heckman, and he lived on a tract of land near the little [town?] of Benton, Ark. He [made?] a living for his family by doing a little farming and operating a small [whiskey?] still. [In?] those days, there was no tax or license required to operate a still or sell liquor. He made the whiskey from corn which was raised on our farm, and sold it in [Little?] Rock. [With?] the money he made from the sale of liquor, he bought the few things that were required for family use.

“A little money want a long way in meeting that which my folks had to buy, because we raised in our field and obtained from the country around practically all we required at home. C12 - 2/11/41 - Texas

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“[Our?] beef was obtained from the few cattle that father raised. [They?] also furnished the milk, butter and cream for our table. The pork was obtained from the hogs that raised themselves in the river bottom, living on nuts and vegetation, [and?] was excellent meat. Besides the beef and pork, we has access to an [abundance?] of [edible?] wild animals and fowls. [Deer?] would be seen nearly any time one went into the woods. In fact, deer were a nuisance to our [vegetable?] patch. It was necessary to build an extra high fence to keep the animals out of our garden. Wild turkey were in various places, in flocks of a hundred or more. There were also brushhen, rabbits and bear to be had, if one cared to hunt for them.

“[Father?] raised a little wheat, corn, cane and cotton, besides the [vegetables?].

“The wheat was used for our flour supply, cane for syrup, cotton for clothes, [and?] [the?] corn for corn meal and whiskey mash.

“I have [spent?] many [hours?], with mother and the rest of the children, [picking?] cotton seeds out of the [lint?]. We spun the lint into threads, which we wove into cloth. [We?]

had a few sheep, also, [?] [used?] the wool for making clothes. By mixing the cotton and woolen threads, we made a sort of linsey-woolsey cloth.

“Home-spun clothes were the only kind of clothes I had ever seen, or knew existed, until I was at the age of about six, and then father bought a blot of [calico?] cloth. [Then?] he bought that calico and brought it home, we thought its flowers [and?] figures were the most [beautiful in the world. Now, you may have seen folks as proud, but not any prouder than mother and I when we were dressed in that calico. 3 [“We?] had 30 hives of bees, which furnished all the honey, and more, than the family could eat. I can't recall the number of apple trees we had in the orchard, but we had apples by the bushels; [and?] bushels of nice, large, red juicy apples, [rotted?] on the ground. [We?] couldn't sell the fruit, because everyone in that section [had?] more apples then they could use; and I may add [that?] there was plenty of cider around, of the hard and soft variety. [We?] went to the [lowlands?] [during?] strawberry season and picked [oodles?] of the wild strawberries. Mother canned, preserved, and made jell cut of the berries. Raspberries were plentiful and we did the same with those berries.

“From all this, you can see that we lived on the best of food, had the warmest of clothes, and didn't worry about the supply of food.

“Our home was main from logs, but was warm and comfortable; so we were happy [and?] well taken care of.

“The family's first sad event took place when father went to the army. I was not old enough to realize what was taking place, because I was only two years old, but I have recollection of his departure registered [on?] my mine.

“His absence, while he was in the [Confederate?] Army, did not cause the family any physical discomfort. [He?] returned at the close of the war, but was crippled from wound's and finally died from the effects of his injuries, in 1870.

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“I was the youngest of the three children. I had two brothers who were my seniors, and [?] Vermillion, a young lad who was orphaned when a child, lived with us. [He?] took care of the farm while father was in the army. 4 “There was no railroad near our Arkansas home, until about 1870 or '71. [Little?] [Rock?] was around 50 miles away and Benton was our [nearest?] [town?], a distance of 20 miles from our farm. Benton was the farthest we ever were away from home, and that was only on rare occasions. Of course, what there was to be seen at Benton wasn't much.

“[During?] 1870, rumor had it that a railroad wa going to [be?] built into Benton; and did during the 12 months following. [I?] [?] never forget our anticipation of that coming event. [We?] children pestered mother every day for an explanation of a railroad and [a?] train. It was to us the wonder of all wonders. Mother promised to take us to Benton [the?] day the first train came in, and she did.

“[On?] the day of the big event, the team of horsed were hitched to the wagon and we started before daylight on our 20 mile ride to [see?] a railroad and its train. [We?] females carried along our calico dresses, made from the bolt of calico father had bought, which was the proper dress for the occasion. [Those?] dresses were only worn on special occasions. For instance, if we were called upon to [?] a reception committee to welcome some high [official?]. [When?] we were about a mile from town, we changed form our home-spun to the calico and arrived in town properly attired.

“We drove up to near the depot where we tied the team to a [sapling?], then joined a crowd of people on the platform who were waiting for the train's arrival. It was an anxious wait, but finally the smoke from the [engine?] was sighted [and?] there went up a chorus of voices yelling, 'there she comes!' The train, which was an [engine?], several box cars and a caboose, came rolling up to the 5 depot. To us, it was a majestic thing. But when it reached the platform over half the people left the [platform?] [?] a run, and we Heckman children were in the crowd of runners. No sir, we wouldn't take any chances with that engine staying on the track or not [bursting?]. The way the train was swaying on that newly

layed track and the engine popping off steam, indicated to us the darn thing was about to destroy everything around there. [To?] our better judgment and common sense told us to give the contrivance plenty of room.

“Our team, which had been raised in the hills and valleys of [?] county like us folks, had never seen a train, and the team used the same kind of common sense that we humans did. There was a difference, however, in that the team didn't consider the wagon, harness, and our lunch which was in the [wagon?]. That team reared back a couple times which put such a strain on the tie ropes that it caused the ties to bread, and the horses started for some other place going at their best speed.

“The result of that team's run was a broken wagon and harness, beyond repair. That was a disaster for mother to face. However, the calamity for us children was the loss of the lunch. Mother had roasted an excellent fat young turkey hen with dressing. [She?] [had?] also, baked a raspberry pie some strawberry preserve tarts, and made some vegetable salad, all of which was to be enjoyed under the shade of a tree after the train's arrival. In addition, mother had promised to buy each of us a bottle of red pop. Being deprived of the pop by the run-away was the crushing misfortune for us children, because red pop, those days, was the greatest treat children could receive. 6 “[My?] brother John had gone to Texas, and settle in [Bell?] county, a short time before the railroad built into Benton. He located at the [Little?] [River?] bottom and started a farm. Mother desired to move to where brother was. Carrying out her wishes, mother moved her family to the [Little?] River section of Bell County in 1872, and made her home with brother John.

“[We?] sold our property for a trifle. In those days land in the section of [?] county in Arkansas did not bring any price. [What?] we received was about enough to pay for the labor time spent in making the improvements and that was not much.

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“[We?] packed our personal effects [and?] took a train at Benton with Texardana as our destination, because that was the farthest point we could travel by rail at the time. [From?] Texarkana to [Belton?], Bell county, we traveled in a wagon pulled by a team of horses.

“The accommodations furnished passengers on that Arkansas train was a box car to ride in, with wooden benches for seats. However, we enjoyed the trip [exceedingly?] well. since it was an experience and one that not many folks in our section had an opportunity to enjoy, and we felt very [important?].

“[To?] find a means of transportation from Texarkana to Bell county presented a [problem?] for mother to overcome. She finally located a party who was in the freighting business and he agreed [to?] haul the family to Rockdale, which was his home, for [$70.00?]. Rockdale was about 30 miles beyond and 30 miles east of Belton, but that was the best we could do, so mother accepted and we started on the overland trip.

“The freighter had a load without mother and us children, so 7 he let his team take its time and requested us to walk all we could. [We?] children walked a great deal of the trip and when the freighter arrived at the flat prairie country between Texarkana and [Dallas?], the [scene?] was a revelation to us children. [We?] had never seen anything but a country of hills, valleys and woods.

“There, on the flat prairie, we could see for miles, and there were large herds of cattle grazing, here and there, in every direction that we looked; but just [occasionally?] would we see a house.

“[We?] could easily walk as fast, or faster, than the team traveled. [We?] children being interested in the new scenery, would examine thing as we passed along the trail. Sometimes we would lag considerable distance behind, the dog-trot to catch up with the wagon. [We?] padded quite close to a [herd?] of cattle one afternoon and stopped to look at the animals, because the longhorns were [interesting?] to us. [We?] didn't think

the animals would not any different from the tame cattle we had at home, but we soon learned there was a difference in the nature of the two kinds of cattle. Several of the steers snorted and started after us. We ran for the wagon, yelling as loud as we could. Our yelling attracted the attention of the freighter and [he?] stopped. By stopping, the freighter enable us to reach the wagon just in time to beat the longhorns out of their designs.

“All our meals were cooked in the open over a campfire, and we slept under the wagon on a pallet. [We?] had experienced one period of two days rain, which interfered with our meal making and was disagreeable otherwise. [We?] traveled over some black land and the team nearly became exhausted pulling the load. [We?] were compelled to walk, to keep the load as light as possible, and walking in that sticky 8 [mud?] was a job nearly put me out.

[“We?] [forded?] creeks, rivers and streams of various kinds. [We?] traveled over rocks, sand and mud roads, but finally arrived at [Dallas?] after what seemed ages.

“[Dallas?] was a [small?] place then, but interesting to us children, because it was the largest town we had ever seen. The freighter rested his team for a day and transacted business while at Dallas. [We?] Heckmans took advantage of the stay and enjoyed ourselves viewing the town and its stores with the many things for sale. One of the things I saw for sale was apples, which I could not understand a reason for because no one thought of selling apples in Arkansas where we had lived.

“[While?] at Dallas I saw my first paper bag. Mother and I were walking on the street and met a man carrying a paper bag, full of some article. My [curiosity?] was aroused and I asked mother what was the thing the man was carrying. She replied: Where I was reared in Missouri, we called it a paper bag, but where you have been reared the folks call it a poke. I pestered mother till I secured a satisfactory explanation from her of the functions of a paper bag.

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“The freighter finally arrived at Rockdale with his load of freight and passengers, but there we were about 60 miles from brother's farm. Mother had mailed a letter to brother about our departure from Arkansas, for Belton, Tex., and there is where we expected to meet him. However, it took about a week or more for a letter to reach its destination from Arkansas to middle Texas, and the time it would be placed in the hands of the addressee [depended?] on when he made a trip to town for his mail. However, brother had 9 received our letter and was watching at Belton for our arrival.

“When we arrived in Rockdale our money was getting low, making it necessary to conserve it, so we waited for a chance to get word to brother, or find someone who was traveling with a wagon to Belton and would give us [transportation?] for a small sum. [While?] waiting to find a way to reach Belton, my brother James and I washed dishes in a hotel to pay for our meals.

[“We?] were at Rockdale for three weeks and [during?] that time word reached Belton, through some cowboy, about John Heckman's mother and children being stranded at [Rockdale?]. [?] cowboy at Belton, hearing the news, hunted up brother and reported our location to him. He then, of course, came after us [and?] we [finally?] arrived at his farm and what was our future home.

“Just as soon as we became settled, we children started to get into the cattle business.

“The [?] was an open range and full of cattle. [What?] farms existed in that country then were in the river bottoms. Horses ran wild in places and brother John caught and wrangled some for us to ride. Soon as we [had?] a [?] ready for work we all became busy.

“[First?], we built a corral on the upland near brother's farm. Then we hunted Mavericks, which were driven into the corral. [When?] the corral became filled, we then branded the animals with a brand made thus: It was referred to as the bar over brand. [We?] adopted and registered that brand at Belton in my name, Annie Heckman.

“I was [nearing?] my tenth year, and took to riding and other cow work as a boy does. I worked with the boys riding over the range looking for Mavericks. There were a good number of the unbranded 10 cattle to be found that were not the property of anyone, and at that time a number of people started herds by picking up Mavericks.

“By [early?] [Spring?] of 1873 there were around 200 cows carrying the bar over brand and about that many steers. We had a [good?] [crop?] of calves that Spring and, with our constant hunting [for?] Mavericks, by Fall we had a nice herd, numbering close to [?]. In the Spring of ['74?] we were ready to sell some cattle.

[“We?] kept a [number?] of salt licks located in the timber near the river bottom, adjacent to the farm, and they held the cattle in that [vicinity?] quite well. [The?] animals would do most of their grazing on the upland, but during bad weather the herd would drift to the timber.

“[When?] 1874 arrived I was able to do my share of the cowhand's work. I could ride'em, throw and loop with the rope, and handle the branding iron, about equal with the boys. Of course, because of the [difference?] in [strength?], the boys could beat me at bulldogging and work of that nature. [Such?] work was too strenuous for me and [?] left it for the boys to do. I did do some wrangling, because I enjoyed the work, but not the worst of the pitchers. The near [snakebloods?] I left for the boys to handle. I have taken many of spills off of a horse and it's a wonder I did not have every bone in my body broken. However, [I?] was taught the art [of?] handling my body in a fall out of a saddle, by my brother John.

“I had great [agility?] and easily learned how to throw my body in the direction it was [going?], instead of trying to break the fall. It is a matter of balance, and controling the body to meet the fall.

The cattle we sold were driven to market in other herds. There were two men we turned our market cattle over to, [Sol?] White and 11 Joe [Bundle?]. Each of them drove herds

regularly, and [when?] we cut in some of our cattle our money would be paid [promptly?] as soon as they completed the drive.

“Brother's farm was located near what we called the [Three?] Works of the [Little?] River, about 10 miles south of Belton. Just a few miles from the farm was a crossing of the river, called the Griffin crossing. The drovers usually watered and bedded their [herds?] at the crossing. [Whenever?[we had cattle to [?] with either [White's?] or Bundle's herd, we would cut our [cattle?] into the herd just before bedding time; therefore, our cattle would always drift off with the driving herd without any trouble.

“[During?] the time I worked on our range we experienced just one stampede handling our market while cutting the herd into [drover's?] cattle. We were expecting [?] White and had cut out 75 steers in the class of threes, to turn into his herd. [We?] [had?] our steers and were holding them about two miles from the crossing. When [?] arrived, we started [to?] move our herd towards Griffin's crossing. The wind was blowing quite strong, and just as we [approached?] [Sol's?] chuck wagon a piece of canvas torn loose from it. This piece of canvas began to flap with the wind and our steers started in the opposite direction, going at their best speed. Brother James and I rode at the head of the herd, trying to turn the animals so we could put them to [?]. [We?] rode about an hour before we could accomplish our purpose.

“By the time we had the [herd?] milling, [?] and several other waddies from [Sol's?] crew came and the whole crowd stayed with the herd till the animals showed a tendency to bed; then we drifted the herd 12 to the crossing, where they mixed with the other cattle and soon became scattered among 2,500 animals.

“During the run my ability to handle my body in a spill, perhaps, saved my life. My horse hit a hole and stumbled to its knees. I went, head forward, out of the saddle and landed in front of the horse, but I was on my feet as soon as the horse regained his and had my

hand hold of the saddle horn. I swung into the saddle and was away again. If that horse had gotten away from me, the steers would surely have stomped me to death.

“Our [herd?] was not large and it gave us very little trouble. We were somewhat fortunate, so far as trouble was concerned. Ranchers and settlers west of us had to meet Indian [depredations?] and rustler troubles, but in our section we were bothered with neither.

“Besides attending to our herd, our only excitement was attending the [dances?], which were held frequently, first at one place and then another.

“I showed musical talent at an early age and learned to play a fiddle, therefore I was in great demand to agitate the [cutgut?], as the cowboys called playing the fiddle.

“Mother had a very good education and considerable musical knowledge. She was the only teacher we children had. In addition to teaching me my three R's, she taught me the fundamentals of music. My first instrument was a gourd that resembled a fiddle, which my brother made for me. On that gourd affair I learned to play tunes. When I was eight years old, the folks bought me a fiddle and [then?] I did my practicing with it. By the time I was 13 years old, I could pull a mean bow, [?] the expression of our neighbors about my playing. 13 “Because of my playing ability, I was called upon to agitate the [catgut?] at the cowboy's dances. I have ridden horseback for a distance of 30 miles to attend and play for a settlement [dance?]. The dances those days were the big event and all enjoyed the affairs greatly.

“[The?] cowboys came from a distance of 60 miles at times and the boys presented an unusual appearance dressed in their working clothes, except their spurs and [six-gun?]. That part of their equipment would be left outside. That [applied?] to me, too, as I wore my six-gun and could use it quite well. While I was never called on to use my gun, in those days one never knew when it would be necessary.

["?] room in the house where the dance was held would be cleared of all furniture, and a platform for the fiddlers would be arranged in one corner. Upon that platform, which was usually the eating table, I would sit, just a tot of a girl; and, as the cowboys would say, I 'poured it on". I certainly enjoyed doing it. [??] usually played second with me and we made an excellent team.

"Now, I shall tell where my big thrill came in [?] the close [of?] the dance, the cowboys would say, 'now [Annie?] stand the platform and play us your favorite tune. That I would do, and while [?] was playing money would come flying onto the platform. I have secured money gifts amounting to $150.00 by a money shower form the cowhands for my playing.

"One of the difficulties the men had to contend with, at dances, was the shortage of women. There were more males than females in the country those days; and of course, at the dances, there were two Jacks to every Jill. To meet the uneven number in sex, some 14 men were compelled to dance the female part. The men taking the female part always wore a ribbon to designate their part and were a source of merriment to all those present.

"Trouble at the dances was rare, [and?] [during?] all the time I [played?] for cowboy dances only once was there trouble that ended fatally. It took place during a dance held at [Little?] River City. [Two?] cowhands became involved in an argument over a girl. One [of?] the waddies, it seemed, considered he had the right of a certain girls attention and the other waddy didn't agree with him. The two did the customary thing by going outside of the house to [?] the issue. I may state that what few quarrels I saw at a dance, none were settled in the house. [Well?], the two waddies went outside and each must have went [for?] his gun, because it wasn't long before we on the inside heard shooting. The usual thing took place: those who had not already gone to watch the [fight?], rushed out with the [sound?] of the first shot. Naturally, I followed the crowd; [?] when I reached the scene of the shooting, on the ground lay one of the men. He was shot high up in the left breast and bleeding [?]. [?] [Millet?] gave me his red bandana, [?] which I wrapped my white handkerchief, and plugged the bullet hole the best I could. That stopped the blood

from flowing to a [great?] extent. A couple of men started to a doctor with the fellow, but the man [died?] before they had traveled very far.

“After the party had departed with the wounded fellow, the rest resumed dancing. It may seem that the dancers were a hard and cold-hearted lot, but the fact is they were not. Arguments were settled so often with the six gun in those days that the folks became 15 accustomed to shooting affairs.

One other thing I was called upon to do, for the entertainment [of?] the crowd at dances, was tap and jig dancing occasionally. [?] came to me naturally, the same as music. I was in one of my natural elements when doing a jig. I could watch a person and copy the routine easily, and in a short time execute the steps.

“I practiced the [Arkansas?] Traveler jig in a small space until I could do it in a space two feet square. After I had the dance [perfected, we were at a dance and my brother offered to bet that I could do the dance on his bandana. The bet was taken quickly. Brother placed his bandana on the floor and I did the dance and won the bet for him, which money he gave to me.

“After the dance was completed, the cowhands said they knew that they would lose the bet, but made it to have the chance of seeing me do the dance, and that they had received their money's worth.

“I have never given up dancing and fiddling entirely. [As?] late as 1935 I won a prize in an [oldtimers'?] fiddling contest, held at the Fort Worth Recreation Building and sponsored by the Good Fellows and Santa Pals organization. I also won a prize for jigging.

“I married Albert [?] in [1880?] and then quit the range. My husband was intent on farming and we took up a piece of land in the [Little?] River bottom. Our closest neighbor was six miles away. There my first four children were born, and without the attention of a physician. My first child was born without the [?] of a midwife or a neighbor. The child's

birth took place while my husband was on his way to get a neighbor's wife to be with me. When the [?] people 16 returned, the child was nursing. Such was what women often experienced during our early days, and thought nothing of it.

“I lost my husband in 1903, then I came to Fort Worth. Since that time I have operated rooming house for a livelihood. I married Hightower in the middle of the 1900's, but continued with my rooming house business.